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Inside This Issue

1 Overview Brochure

1 In the Spotlight

2 Combined Charities

3 FAQ's

3 Special Events

4 Business Bus Hop

4 Noteworthy

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Purchasing Agent

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Pct. 2 Commissioner Karen Sonleitner
Pct. 3 Commissioner Margaret Moore
Pct. 4 Commissioner Margaret Gomez

Travis County
Purchasing Board

Pct. 4 County Commissioner
Margaret Gomez, Chairperson
Pct. 3 County Commissioner Margaret Moore
353rd District Ct. Judge Lora Livingston
201st District Ct. Judge Suzanne Covington
331st District Ct. Judge Bob Perkins

Travis County Purchasing Quarterly

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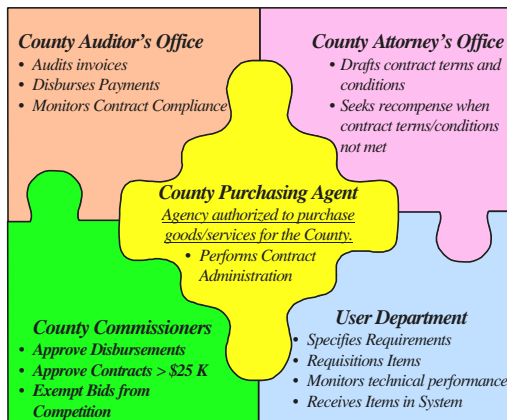
New Brochure Breaks Down Purchasing Cycle

By Jorge Talavera

Did you know there is a "Purchasing Overview" brochure that was designed earlier this year? It provides a thorough rundown of the purchasing cycle, explains the key players and their roles in the County procurement process, and provides helpful hints to those doing business with Travis County.

The brochure was designed to assist vendors with questions about the County's procurement process, and more specifically, the aspects of delivery and payment.

The figure below shows all the "Key County Purchasing Participants" and their designated functions. Vendors new to governmental purchasing are often uncertain of the idiosyncrasies of the process. The primary responsibility to taxpayers mandates a system of checks and balances to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in procurement.



Each "player" has an integral role in the process from the moment a need is realized and a requisition entered into the system (User Department) through contract administration (Purchasing Office) to payment disbursement (County Auditor). The Commissioners Court has an exclusive role as the only entity that approves contracts over \$25,000. Contact the Purchasing Office for your copy. ☺

In the Spotlight Frank Holder

By Jorge Talavera

When Frank Holder was about to be commissioned as an officer in the Air Force, he was headed in one of three directions. Finance, security police, or purchasing, were three viable career options. He chose the latter and after 33 years of government purchasing, he never looks back.

Frank has been married 34 years and has two children in their thirties. Originally from Abilene, he moved to Austin in 1956. Frank has traveled all over the U.S. and abroad, but there is no where in the world this grandfather would rather return than to San Antonio, to be closer to his 18-month-old grandson, Devon.

Where would Frank be now had he not gone into purchasing? He might have become an investigator for the FBI.

"Or at least detective work of some sort. I'm into detail. I look very closely and I have an eye for spotting things that are wrong." Or maybe he would have become a comedian. Frank did have aspirations of becoming an entertainer. "Few people know or would guess this, but I loved being on stage," says Frank.

A lifetime of performing eluded him but not unlike a detective, he now gets the opportunity to use his strict attention to detail and knack for discovering and solving problems daily. As Assistant Purchasing Agent for the Purchasing Office, he has to be sure to read every document, paragraph, sentence and word with a critical eye to ensure that all language is correct and all interpretations have been explored.

"Solving problems is an everyday thing," and strangely enough, he enjoys it.

Frank considers his best attribute to be dependability, which he also expects of his staff



See Spotlight on Page 4



Clockwise from top left: top left: "Longhorn Day" in the Purchasing Office; top right, Who are those masked men?...Die-hard Aggies in burnt orange? bottom left, a sheriff's deputy getting all the "fixins" on her baked potato with a little help from Melissa Hanson and Jason Walker at Purchasing's famous Combined Charities "Spud Fest;" bottom right, more spud action with Richard Villareal, Betty Chapa, Lana Boling, Eric Francois and Rose Garcia.

2001 Combined Charities Campaign A Success

The Purchasing Office started this year's Combined Charities campaign with a tough challenge: raise double the amount of money raised last year for those who benefit from the Travis County Combined Charities Campaign. The campaign ended in sweet success.

Purchasing was able to both reach and surpass the goal of \$2,600, raising \$3,037.39, 221% of 2000's total.

A total of \$1,086.39 was raised through the online auction of donated items such as Ice Bats tickets, and special events

including the sale of patriotic scarves and ties, baked potatoes, soft drinks and various household items. Purchasing office staff was quick to volunteer their time to help with the Combined Charities events.

The other \$1,951 came from generous staff pledges and payroll deductions, much of which was raised with one final push in the last week of the campaign, thanks to the



"Longhorn Day" challenge.

The two die-hard Aggies in Purchasing agreed to wear Longhorn colors if two benchmarks set forth were met. The first benchmark called for a donation of \$700 from five contributors, and the second was seven donating \$1,000. The goals were met and the Purchasing Office had the privilege of seeing Aggies become "Longhorns for a Day."

The campaign was not only a success in meeting and surpassing the goal set out before the campaign began, but also in bringing people together to raise money for a great cause through goodwill, generosity and fun. Q

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What exactly are "specifications" for?

A: A specification is a concise description of goods or services that an entity seeks to buy, and the requirements the vendor must meet in order to be considered for the award.

A "spec" may include requirements for testing, inspection, or preparing any goods or services for delivery, or preparing or installing them for use.

A good "spec" contains the following elements: (a) it identifies a minimum requirement; (b) it allows for maximum competition; (c) it identifies the test methods to be used to verify compliance with the requirement and; (d) it contributes to obtaining the best value using a fair, equitable and transparent contract award process.

Q: When should I put in a requisition for an item I will need in the near future?

A: As soon as possible. The requisitioner must account for the time it takes for the Purchasing Office to determine the appropriate purchasing procedures based on the cost of the purchase, the goods and services to be purchased, the existing contracts for goods and services and other relevant factors.

The consequence of not putting a requisition into the system as soon as possible? The end user may not receive the product in the time expected which can lead to a number of issues depending on the need.

Q: When it comes to specifications, what exactly does "approved equal" mean?

A: A bidder may submit a Request for Approved Equal provided that such a request is submitted in writing and received with each bidder's bid. The request must be supported by evidence to clearly demonstrate that *the substitute offered is equal to or better than the specifications requirement* and that it has a record of adequate performance and reliability.

Q: What is the maximum amount of time you can wait to receive items in HTE? Why?

A: You should not wait any amount of time to receive the items in HTE. After physically receiving a product, items should be thoroughly inspected to determine if the order was accurate and the product is working properly without defects or damage.

If the product is *not* in an acceptable condition, contact the appropriate buyer to return the product for a replacement. *If the product is "receivable," it should be received immediately in HTE.* Receiving the item is extremely important since not doing so may lead to delays in payment to the vendor. ☺

Purchasing Staff Phone List

Main Number 854-9700

Purchasing Agent	Cyd Grimes	854-9761
Asst. Purchasing Agent	Frank Holder	854-9451
Asst. Purchasing Agent	Vacant	854-9764
Business Sys. Consultant	Scott Worthington	854-4851
HUB Coordinator	Sylvia Lopez	854-4561
HUB Specialist	Jorge Talavera	854-9914
Purchasing Agent Asst. III	Lolly Jones	854-4204
Purchasing Agent Asst. III	Lori Clyde	854-4205
Purchasing Agent Asst. III	Rose Garcia	854-9763
Purchasing Agent Asst. III	Loren Breland	854-4854
Purchasing Agent Asst. II	Ella Hill	854-4853
Purchasing Agent Asst. II	Richard Villareal	854-4881
Purchasing Agent Asst. II	Manuel Perez	854-9762
Purchasing Agent Asst. I	Donald Rollack	854-9760
Purchasing Agent Asst. III	Lou Britt	854-4852
Purchasing Agent Asst. III	Jason Walker	854-4562
Purchasing Agent Asst. III	Eric Francois	854-9853
Executive Assistant	Lana Boling	854-9766
Purchasing Clerk IV	Melissa Hanson	854-9915
Purchasing Clerk III	John Gonzalez	854-9916
Purchasing Clerk III	Elsa Uresti	854-9917
Purchasing Clerk II	Betty Chapa	854-9918
Fixed Asset Manager	Ron Dube	854-6458
Warehouse Supervisor	Dan Rollier	854-6459
Fixed Asset Associate	Matt Phillips	854-6459
Purchasing Agent Asst. IV	Marvin Brice	854-9765
Purchasing Agent Asst. IV	Jerry Raisch	854-9724
Purchasing Agent Asst. IV	David Moreno	854-4850

Quarterly Quote

"We are all faced with great opportunities...brilliantly disguised as impossible situations."

Special Events Calendar

Austin

2/8/02

3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Frank Erwin Center Reception Hall

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

FORUM

Hosted by the

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Texas Department of Transportation

Texas Lottery Commission

University of Texas at Austin

Austin

2/8/02

6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Frank Erwin Center Reception Hall

DOING BUSINESS TEXAS STYLE

SPOT BID CONTRACT FAIR

Hosted by

5th African American Legislative

Summit

Austin

2/25/2002

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Stephen F. Austin Bldg. at

1700 N. Congress Ave.

SECOND ANNUAL STEPHEN F.

AUSTIN ECONOMIC

OPPORTUNITY FORUM"

Presented by the Texas Department of

Economic Development

Texas Water Development Board

Texas Department of Agriculture

Texas General Land Office

For information contact Gail Little at

(512) 936-0119.

Austin

02/25/2002

1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Teacher Retirement System Bldg.

1000 Red River

SECOND ANNUAL PURCHASING

AND HUB CONNECTION

Presented by the Teacher Retirement

System of Texas and the Texas

Workforce Commission

For more information call Debbie Pina

or call (512) 370-0569 or Ardra Gibson

at (512) 463-2284.

A Flower Grows

In dark of night a Rosebud sleeps
A Daffodil - its leaves don't peep
The Jonquil down in languor deep
The Violet the rest it reaps
And yet they wait for break of day
To explode in colors and such a spray
Painting the world in riotous hues
Of reds, yellows, purples and blues
All the world may love their looks
And yet they fade - they cannot brook
For in the Garden of Life you are a flower
The loveliest grown in God's bower.

-Donald Rollack

BUS HOPPING FROM OLTORF TO

"Please come in. Welcome," the small business owner says with a smile, as he rearranges the furniture in his business to accommodate our group of five for an impromptu meeting that ends up being both educational and enjoyable. Amtech, a computer parts and service store, was the final stop of the first Travis County "Business Bus Hop," which took place on December 6th and covered locations all over Austin.

Purchasing Office HUB staff, Travis County buyers and a special guest buyer from the Texas Department of Insurance got together for the first event of this kind. The Bus Hop involved several site visits to HUB businesses and small business resource organizations around town to acquaint and connect government buyers with their operations.

Some locations visited included Fastrack, a learning and career advancement center, Architectural Habitat of Austin, a woman-owned general construction contractor and the aforementioned Amtech Computer Systems, among several others.

The "Bus Hop," organized by Sylvia Lopez, HUB Coordinator, was successful in maintaining the dialogue between the Purchasing Office and the area HUB community.

The next "Business Bus Hop" to be scheduled later this year will target getting County personnel to "hop on the bus." A very special thanks goes out to Ella Hill, David Moreno, Robert Abeita and Jorge Talavera for supporting this first time initiative.

Spotlight • Continued from Page 1

and he is motivated by accomplishment.

"Being able to rely on a buyer to employ integrity, ethics, common sense, and lessons learned," Frank says, "All of that is rolled up into dependability."

A major accomplishment is the progress made in tracking contract expiration dates. "We know four months in advance of when a contract is going to expire...minimizing the lack of contract coverage for an item or service."

Improving the communication level with contractors over the last several years has also been a notable accomplishment. Frank believes strongly that "there are always better ways of doing things." In terms of improving the process in the Purchasing Office, change is limited because state law governs the system. "Our compliance with state law and employment of policies and procedures...necessitates the lead time that it takes to carry out purchases."

The one area of improvement he would like to see legislators address is in increasing the competitive bidding threshold to \$50,000 to enable more telephone solicitations and expedite the process. Frank also advocates legislation allowing the Purchasing Agent to choose the best method of procurement according to the situation at hand.

The utilization of Historically Underutilized Businesses is a continually improving situation.

"Being able to rely on a buyer to employ integrity, ethics, common sense and lessons learned...all of that is rolled up into dependability."

"The HUB program is not the sole responsibility of the Purchasing Office and of sole interest to the Court and Purchasing," says Frank, "but rather...a socioeconomic program that is beneficial to the well being of all of Travis County."

"Because of it, new businesses...survive, giving us a broader vendor database. The more competition the better. Everyone in Travis County has a stake in the success of the

County's HUB program. It makes for a stronger society and economic base...and it creates new jobs."

When Frank leaves, he hopes to be remembered as someone who "treated situations objectively and treated people fairly."

Asked about his favorite quote, Frank revealed that he is a quote collector, and has collected nearly 300 favorite quotes over the years.

Lowry Air Force Base, Denver, Colorado, 1975, Frank came across a standout quote he lives by today.

In his desk drawer, Frank still keeps the piece of paper the quote was written on the first time he read it over 25 years ago. The quote takes on more meaning considering he "turned his life over to God" in 1995 at age 49, and says it is never too late. It reads, "What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God." ❧

NOTEWORTHY...

The Commissioners Court approved on consent a letter seeking a countywide recommitment to the County's HUB program on 12/18/2001. The letter was intended to spark the program's effectiveness by reminding County personnel who deal with procurement that the success of the HUB program relies on the actions of all County personnel and greatly benefits the area small business community. ❧

The HUB Office produced a specialized listing of HUB architects and engineers earlier this year for use by those interested in easily locating HUBs in these areas. More trade-specific listings will be produced in FY '02, but the trades to be targeted are yet to be determined. In order to produce a list that is useful to county personnel who perform purchasing functions or others who would have use for the listings, we are seeking suggestions for trades. Please email suggestions to the address below. ❧

A new television show will be featured on TCTV-17 beginning the first quarter of FY '02 entitled "Doing Business." The show will highlight area Historically Underutilized Businesses to discuss the pitfalls, perils, benefits and success stories of HUB business owners. The effort will be part of a continuing outreach effort to advocate HUB utilization within the County and endorse HUBs overall to support their survival and success. ❧

The Travis County Purchasing Quarterly is a work in progress that will continue to grow and improve.

We are always open to your suggestions so please feel free to email your ideas to

Jorge.Talavera@co.travis.tx.us.
We at the Travis County Purchasing Office are striving to improve our service to you. Please let us know how we can better serve you. ❧



When visiting the Purchasing Office, to ensure that you are serviced efficiently, please stop at the front desk. All documents will be logged in, date stamped and distributed appropriately. If you need to speak with a staff member, someone in the Purchasing Office will be happy to assist you.